

PTPDM Policy Implications and Implementation Challenges Pertaining to Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for Basic School Teachers in Ghana

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Abstract

Purpose: This paper investigates into the policy implications and implementation challenges of the Pre-tertiary Teacher Professional Development and Management (PTPDM) policy framework for teachers in Ghana. The study touches on the multifaceted implications, and challenges encountered in implementing Continuous Professional Development (CPD) initiatives for teachers in Ghana as stipulated in the PTPDM policy document.

Method: The study, which is a qualitative research approach, uses the phenomenological design to explore actual experiences and teachers' thoughts in connection to the PTPDM policy. With the aid of semi-structured interviews with teachers and head teachers, in addition to the analysis of the contents of the PTPDM policy document, the paper seeks to bring to light the diverse complexities of the PTPDM policy implementation, throwing more light on barriers, facilitators, and socio-cultural contexts that define the effectiveness of CPD initiatives. Thematic analysis was used with the goal of identifying relevant themes, patterns, and personal interpretations of the policy by the participants involved.

Results: The findings of this paper point out crucial insights into the challenges that educators face in benefiting from CPD as stipulated in the PTPDM policy, shedding more light on the implications of the policy, resource constraints, pedagogical hurdle, and institutional barriers.

Contribution: This paper contributes to an in-depth view of the challenges faced, and the implications emerging from the PTPDM policy, with insights for policy

reform, and improvement in creating a sustainable professional development among teachers in the Ghanaian educational system.

Keywords

Pre-tertiary Teacher Professional Development and Management (PTPDM), Continuous Professional Development (CPD), Policy framework, Training, and Education.

1. Introduction

While most teachers are trained to be equipped with certain pedagogical skills before joining the teaching fraternity, it is no secret that such pre-skills which teachers bring on the job cannot last them their entire time in the profession. This is because the world as we know now, keeps advancing, and new set of skills are always needed to face it (Boohene et al., 2017; Barnes et al., 2024) which teachers are no exceptions. For this reason, continually upgrading one's knowledge and skills cannot be taken for granted. Continuous Professional Development (CPD), is a key tool which when used appropriately, can have positive impact on educational outcomes. Thus, with the aid of CPD, educators get equipped with ongoing skills, knowledge, and approaches that are needed to adapt to the dynamic educational era we find ourselves in, which in effect, develops teachers' competencies: thereby, positively affecting their choices of teaching methodologies, and eventually enhancing educational outcomes. CPD does not conform to formal education alone, but goes beyond to include learning experiences such as workshops, conferences, self-directed learning, mentoring, in-service training, and professional learning communities.

The educational sector of Ghana, like many other countries, places much emphasis on student learning outcomes, and connects that to teachers' competencies. Right from the basic to tertiary, policies of varied kinds that advocate for support for learners are put in place to aid learners to feel comfortable to achieve their best. Such of these policies include Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE), which provides tuition free, textbooks free, feeding free, and in some communities, uniform free for all kindergarten one (1) to basic six (6) pupils; tuition, and textbooks free for all basic seven (7) to basic nine (9) learners. Another of the policies in place to support learners also include the Free Senior High School (FSHS) policy, which like the FCUBE, provides everything, including tuition, text and exercise books, uniforms, and feeding (which also extends to day students) freely for all senior high school learners.

The above is just a couple of the policies that indicate the educational sector of Ghana's full support for learners' comfort in order to achieve their best. Even though the performance of learners is always tied to teachers' command over the respective subjects they teach in Ghana's educational system, and the Ministry of Education acknowledges the importance of the teachers continuous professional development, with teachers attending workshops being very common in the setting, there had not been any specific policies formulated to give clear details concerning Teacher Continuous Professional Development until in 2012, when the Pre-tertiary Teacher Professional Development and Management (PTPDM) was enacted. Due to the less attention that had been directed towards teacher CPD in Ghana (Kadingi, 2006; Asare, Mereku, Anamuah- Mensah & Oduro, 2012), the impact of the PTPDM, which could have otherwise helped teachers to acquire more skills, and knowledge to inform their instructional choices for quality teaching also is clearly non-existent (Atta & Mensah, 2015).

Pre-tertiary teachers of Ghana include all teachers who teach at kindergarten, primary, junior high, and senior schools, both mainstreams, and special schools throughout the country. These teachers, according to the Ministry of Education's (MoE) categorization, include both professionals and non-professionals who are all found in the various public schools executing the duties of teachers. Professional teachers include those trained to be equipped with knowledge in both content and methodology by the various Colleges of Education (CoE), and two education universities in the country. On the other hand, non-professional teachers, according to the MoE, encompasses all personnel's who teach in the education system with certificates other than education certificate. These people, per the MoE's description, go beyond to include even Senior High School (SHS) leavers. From the above description of who falls under the pre-tertiary teacher group, it is clear that the various schools in the Ghanaian educational system is teeming with all sort of teachers, and thus, the need to look into the policy that guides their continual learning to keep up with the changing world.

2. Review of the Literature

Varied researches have brought to light the importance of continually equipping teachers with more, and current skills and knowledge while they are still on the job. This has led many educational sectors all over the world to provide avenues for CPD in order to make their education systems better (Guskey, 2000; Guskey & Yoon, 2009). According to Asabere-A. et al. (2018), CPD is not only needed

with Ghana's educational sector to enhance teaching quality, and learning outcomes, but to also address all kinds of challenges confronted in almost all Ghanaian classrooms. Similarly, Opoku A. (2013) also advocated for collaborative learning environments among Ghanaian teachers, through CPD initiatives that foster the said collaboration, knowledge sharing, and collective responsibility for positive impact. These initiatives, should not comprise of just lectures, and talks given by professionals and mentors, but should go beyond to include pre-training programmes, mentoring, adding more value, and follow-up learning (Hassan, 2013). With the aid of teacher CPD, the bridge that is created as a result of the disassociation between theory, and content learnt in training colleges verses the actual happenings in the classroom is mended (Jarvis & Algozzine, 2006). Thus, always enhancing teachers' professional competencies, using teacher-centred approaches where specific needs of the teachers are prioritized, is essential to improving teachers' skills, and abilities which in effect, can positively impact students' learning achievements (Moyle, 2007). There are other researches that have equally established a link between teacher quality and learning outcomes of students; there lationship between in-service training and learning achievements of students (An grist & Lavy, 2001; Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Rivkin, Hanushek, Kain, 2005; Rockoff, 2004). Ghana has been facing the problem of poor academic performance of students for quite some time, and as stated earlier, has had numerous policies in place to help better students' learning outcomes. However, regardless of the many researches that have proven the link between teachers' competencies, and students' learning outcomes, much attention has not been paid to the PD of teachers in the country in the sense that there had not been a coherent policy framework to guide the implementation of teachers' CPD plans and practices in spite of the country's commitment to improving teacher quality.

Overview of the Pre-tertiary Teacher Professional Development and Management (PTPDM) Policy

In 2012, the policy document which backs teachers' CPD, the Pre-tertiary Teacher Professional Development and Management (PTPDM) was launched in Ghana, but revised in 2018. The revised policy based its grounds on Act 774 of the 2008 Educational Act of Ghana. The Act 778 had the aim of improving the quality of education across the country in order to produce sound individuals who have the needed knowledge, skills, values, aptitude, and attitude to excel every where, particularly, in teaching. Aside the 2008 Educational Act, the PTPDM policy 2018 also draws its legitimisation on Ghana's Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2010-2020, which had Pre-tertiary Education as one of its

focal areas, and emphatically stated skill improvement, enhancement of quality education, and indicated that the PTPDM policy recognises INSET and professional standards as the basis for teacher PD. This policy, was introduced to deal with issues in connection with teacher development and management of pre-tertiary education in Ghana, with key emphasis on teacher development, and management in Ghana, and according to the MoE (2012), the policy had come at the right time since the quality of education, particularly, at the pre-tertiary levels was very low. Among other related teacher development and management issues the policy sought to address were: Competency Based Professional Standards, Teacher Professional Development Programmes and Activities, Pre-service Teacher Education and Training (PRESET), In-service Education and Training (INSET; Licensing, Teacher Appraisal, Teacher Database, Career Structure and promotion respectively. Most of these are the responsibilities of the National Teaching Council (NTC) as stipulated by the policy document. Per the policy, teachers are to be promoted no longer based on the number of years they have served, but based on their professional development which to some large extent, has a link to the number of CPD programmes they have involved themselves in within the specified years, which according the NTC of Ghana, is supposed to be every three (3) years.

Also, the PTPDM policy 2018 spells out its core objectives as:

- Providing a regulatory framework to manage, and develop teachers into highly proficient practitioners
- Providing a career structure based on evidence of professional teaching, and growth of the teacher.

All the above aims, according to the policy framework, was the nation's commitment to international policies on teachers, and the teaching profession. Among these international policies that the framework points out include:

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): goal four (4); The ILO/UNESCO (1966) guiding principles on teachers and teaching's aspects which aligns with Ghana's teacher development and management policy includes:

- Policy governing entry into preparation for teaching should rest on the need to provide society with an adequate supply of teachers who possess the necessary moral, intellectual and physical qualities, and who have the required professional knowledge and skills
- The status of teachers should be commensurate with the needs of education as assessed in the light of educational aims and objectives; it should be recognized that the proper status of teachers and due public regard for the profession of teaching are of major importance for the full realization of these aims and objectives

- Authorities and teachers should recognize the importance of INSET designed to secure a systematic improvement of the quality and content of education and of teaching techniques
- Teachers should be provided time necessary taking part in INSET programmes
- Authorities, in consultation with teachers' organizations, should promote the establishment of a wide system of INSET, available free to all teachers;
- Teachers should be given both the opportunities and the incentives to participate in courses and facilities and should take full advantage of them
- Promotion should be based on the objective assessment of the teacher's qualifications for the new post, by reference to strictly professional criteria laid down in consultations with teachers' organizations
- Professional standards relating to teacher performance should be defined and maintained with the participation of the teachers' organization.

(ILO/UNESCO Recommendations Concerning the Status of Teachers, 1966; p 21-24)

The PTPDM policy 2018 spells out a capacity building system for teachers which is based on the Competency Based Professional Standards throughout their entire professional life-circle. In connection to that, the TD framework within the PTPDM policy states that all kinds of activities planned for CPD, and all teacher professional development programmes and activities should be designed to make sure that they are:

- **Fit for Purpose** — programmes and activities should equip teachers to meet specific demands of teaching and the management responsibilities that go with these demands
- **Relevant to National Needs** — programmes and activities should be designed to reflect the aims and objectives of pre-tertiary education in Ghana.

The professional standards on which the capacity building system was based are divided into three significant domains with each having its own subs as follow:

- 1. Professional Values and Attitudes**
 - 1.1 Professional Development
 - 1.2 Community of Practice
- 2. Professional Knowledge**
 - 2.1 Knowledge of Educational Frameworks and Curriculum
 - 2.2 Knowledge of Learners

3. Professional Practice

3.1 Managing the Learning Environment

3.2 Teaching and Learning

3.4 Assessment

With the standards, teachers are at the different levels of their career, given clear indications of what they are expected to value, know, understand, and do, pertaining to their levels. Thus, according to the policy document, a teacher must be able to meet all three standards to be deemed competent. Although the PTPDM policy was launched in 2012 in response to finding solutions to the problem of quality teaching, and poor learning outcomes at the basic schools as suggested by prior educational reforms including that of the Education Review Committee (2002); Adami-Issah, Elden, Forsen, and Schrofer Report (2007) and the Ministry of Education Report (2010), it took as long as 2018 before it was fully implemented. From 2014 to 2018, the policy went under numerous reviews in order to develop a framework for its institutionalisation. This was done by the MoE, Ghana Education Service (GES), NTC, and with the help of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The JICA was consulted for assistance because Japan Government had contributed significantly over the years to raise the standards of Mathematics, and Science in basic Education. The testing of the policy started on a pilot base with districts from five different regions in the country. The results of the piloting activities led to the revision of the policy document twice: 2014 & 2017, which was finally approved in 2018. In between the revisions, the policy framework guide was developed in 2016, based on the pilot activities, and in addition to end-line survey, terminal evaluation, amid discussion with stakeholders. However, in order for all public schools across the country to be affected by the policy, there was the need for an implementation plan which was developed, and approved in 2017.

In order to make contributions to the realisation of the PTPDM policy in Ghana, JICA took personnels in MoE, GES, NTC, Human Resource Management Division (HRMD), Teacher Education Division (TED), National INSECT Unit (NIU), and directors from the piloted districts to training in Japan to better understand the in-service teacher training policy in Japan. Aside that, personnels from these categories were also sent by JICA to other countries like Zimbabwe, Malaysia, and Kenya with the same aim. However, even after its implementation, much progress has not been seen in the enhancement of teachers' CPD in the country as the policy framework which is supposed to guide the organisation and define what comes together to make teacher CPD does not clearly stipulate those elements.

3. Research Methodology

The phenomenological approach used to assist in going deeply into individual experiences, allowing for rich understanding of how the PTPDM policy was seen, and experienced by teachers. With the aid of this approach, a more human-centric insights of the policy strengths and challenges, which goes beyond mere documentation was the focus of the usage of this approach. (Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009).

Data Collection Method

The PTPDM policy 2018 document content and semi-structured interviews with some teachers, and head teachers were used to gather information.

Data Analysis

The transcripts of the interviews conducted, and in addition to the contents of the PTPDM policy framework was analyzed with the aid of thematic analysis, where recurring themes, patterns, and discrepancies concerning the implementation challenges, and implications of the policy were identified. Also, with the aid of triangulation, cross-referencing of data was made to ensure validity and reliability.

Themes Identified

The participants from which data was collected through interview included 20 professional teachers from different schools in the country, with 10 being females, and the other half being males. Among these teachers, were 2 newly trained teachers, and the rest, having served for more than 10 years. Apart from 1 of the newly trained who held diploma of education certificate, 15 of the rest of the teachers had bachelor of education, and 4 held master's in education. Through transcription of the interviews, coupled with the content analysis of the PTPDM policy framework, the themes that surfaced from the data included the perceptions that teachers had in relation to the PTPDM policy, challenges in the PTPDM policy implementation, teacher development, and students' learning outcomes, stakeholder recommendations, all of which are described below.

Teachers' Perceptions of the PTPDM Policy

From the interviews, about 90 percent of the teachers knew of the existence of the policy framework, and its goals. However, questions relating to the execution of initiatives to realise the goals of the policy were not welcomed with positivity from the educators. For example, most of the teachers answered that they had not been participating in structured CPD activities as often as they should, giving range of reasons including time limitation, activity relevance hindrance, and money related issues since teachers were asked to pay for almost

all the off-school CPD activities they engaged in. With regards to the school based CPD activities, the schools are made to bear the cost in terms of finding resource persons, and materials for such activities. On the other hand, teachers who want to go for further studies to add more to their professional knowledge can only do so through distance education since after first degree, pre-tertiary teachers are not given study leave with full financial support from their employers.

Through the interviews, it was found that, the few times teachers involved themselves in structured CPD activities were in the form of workshops organised by the district education office or NGOs, and school-based INSET. According to about 95 percent of the participants, they rather felt comfortable going to their colleagues for assistance and advise to better their instruction in their own time, and without paying for it than to sit for hours at a paid workshop which its content cannot help them in their classroom instruction. One teacher, when asked why they didn't attend those structured CPD programmes, quizzed, "what, as a Mathematics teacher, do I gain from paying any amount of money at all, and sitting through a workshop that teaches 'phonetics'? How does my knowledge in 'phonetics' make me a better Mathematics teacher to assist my students to understand, and pass Mathematics?" Another participated teacher, also lamented on their desire to enroll in a master's programme full time since they could not combine distance studies with the teaching workload at the same time, but had not had the courage to do so because they knew once they did so, they would be taken off the very payroll that could assist them financially during their programme.

Challenges in the PTPDM Policy Implementation

Analysis of the policy document brought out the failure of the policy to state precisely what can be categorised as teacher CPD, with no clear guidance on how CPD activities to be organised. The interviews brought to light resource limitation, especially, that of time, finances and infrastructure. Since CPD programmes are mostly organised while the learners are still in school, it becomes difficult for educators to leave the learners on their own, and attend such activities. Again, most of the schools do not have a separate hall or room for the organisation of such programmes, and as a result, use classrooms for school-based CPD activities such as PLC/CPLC activities. as a result, it was found that during such times, the leaners whose classrooms would be used would have to be outside, playing.

Another constraint was the technology literacy and accessibility. It was discovered that virtual PLC activities had been rolled out nationwide, but most teachers are not able to access because of technical know-how.

Teacher Development and Students' Learning Outcomes

From the policy content analysis, it was discovered that the intention of the PTPDM policy was to enhance teaching quality, and consequently the learning outcomes of the students. However, from the interviews conducted, it was only piloted schools which were given much support in terms of resources to test the effectiveness of the policy that had seen positive impact of the policy in the development of their teachers and its reflection on students' learning achievements. Thus, apart from those selected schools that were used during the testing of the policy, not that much difference had been seen in other schools across the country due to the inconsistency in the implementation of the policy. Therefore, there is still disparities in students' learning outcomes across the country.

Stakeholder Recommendations

From analysis of the interviews, most of the participated teachers suggested for adequate funding to back the implementation, and smooth execution of the policy. With enough financing, they believed, would give every teacher the chance to enroll in the kind of CPD activities that could benefit them. Others also recommended for regular review of the policy to identify shortcomings, and introduce new elements that could aid to provide services for matching the evolving challenges, and giving realistic approaches to solving actual problems.

4. Discussion

As stated in the policy framework document, the purpose of the PTPDM is to improve teaching quality for better learning outcomes, but putting the PTPDM policy aims, and the experiences of the participated teachers against each other, it is clear that there is a huge policy gap between the stated objectives and the actual provisions for implementation, leading to discrepancies in execution. Thus, even though the policy recognises teacher CPD as a vital element in promoting teacher quality which in effect can positively impact instructional delivery, the findings from this study put the policy's emphasis on teacher CPD as a mere documentation. The finding on the perceptions, and experiences of the participated teachers in connection to the policy analysis point out there's a lot to be done both in the policy itself, and in its implementation. For example, concerning the policy itself, CPD activities must be categorised clearly, with its organizational structure, and support specified boldly. This, I believe, will make educators informed about the different options available to them through which they can upgrade their skills and knowledge according to their preferences without feeling like being forced to do what they don't want to do. Also, in redefining what makes CPD activities in the policy, informal engagements on professional issues among colleagues should be considered, and a way of

categorising it as part of CPD activity in the policy should be adopted. This is because, as found from this study, most of the teachers preferred seeking their colleagues' help as they found it more useful than going to structured CPD activities. According to prior researches, unstructured CPD activities positively impact instructional practices highly than structured ones (Abonyi et al., 2020; Mendez et al., 2017). Also, the study identified the issue of activity relevance which needs to be addressed. Per the PTPDM policy, all teacher PD programmes are supposed to be competency-based ones, so that its assessment can match the content offered. This is to say that such programmes should be able to cater for the needs of any group of teachers in question. Therefore, generalising CPD activities for all teachers, where just a section may benefit from such activities seem to go contrary to the policy specification. Teachers should be given enough information about structured CPD activities that are organised prior to the organisation time, and be given the liberty to choose which activities they think can benefit them, and which ones cannot in order to decide which ones they will attend, and which they will not. This, I think should be stipulated clearly in the policy document. The relevance of every CPD activity is to add extra value to what already exists within the teacher. Therefore, if teachers are forced to attend CPD activities which do not bear any correlation to their teaching fields, what then, will they have achieved at the end of the said activity? Further review of the policy, should consider the fact that educators have different needs based on their fields of specialisation; hence, the need to feed these different needs accordingly, rather than collectively, except in some instances where the need for generalization is called for. Furthermore, the study found out there is issues with time in connection to assessing CPD activities. Analysis of the policy content stated such activities would not affect instructional hours, since all CPD programmes would be organised after instructional hours, which is when schools have closed. This, the study finds problematic in many instances. All of the teachers interviewed confirmed that the Professional Learning Community (CPL) activities they go to, which is every week on school basis for Primary Teachers, and cluster basis for Junior High School Teachers took place within instructional hours. This, according to them is due to the fact that after spending eight hours in school, going to sit for another two hours for such activities when they had to go and also pick their wards who had also closed from schools was too much for them. Most of these participants complained of their wards being left standard on such days when they were not able to go early to pick them from schools, or their bus stops. Apart from CPL activities, participants also said most other INSET activities organised for them both inside, and outside the schools took them away from the classrooms which affects instructional hours. Thus, because professional development programmes are important, there's the need to make sure teachers

go to these activities with full concentration to be able to learn without thinking of what may be happening in their absence either in the classroom, or their homes; hence, efforts should be made to adjust the timing of CPD programmes. Another important finding worth discussing is the organisation of structured CPD activities for money as pointed out by most of the participants as a hindrance to their involvement in the activities. Even though the content analysis of the PTPDM policy found it stated clearly that in its commitment to the 1966 guiding principles on teachers and teaching of ILO/UNESCO, “Authorities, in consultation with teachers’ organizations, should promote the establishment of a wide system of INSET, available free to all teachers”, participants made it known that they pay for almost all the structured CPD activities that are organised for them. Also, from the content analysis of “Project for Supporting Institutionalisation of the Pre-tertiary Teacher Professional Development and Management Policy”, JICA recommended that if there was going to be money involved before teachers can assess activities for their continuous professional development at any point in time, then the cost should be a shared one, so that teachers do not shoulder the responsibility alone. However, mandatory, and other structured CPD programmes that teachers are made to go they bear the cost by themselves. As a result of having to pay for such activities, many teachers opt not to attend which is a challenge to the full realisation of the policy’s goal. It was discovered from the study that most teachers who pay for such trainings do so in the name getting points which plays an important role in their promotions under the PTPDM policy. Most who did not partake in paid INSETs see such programmes as an excuse for providers of such activities to collect their monies rather than actually train them in anything meaningful since there were some teachers who paid for such programmes without attending, but at the end, got the required points attached. In documentation, the policy spells out a lot, but on the actual grounds, not much is happening. One may ask, what is the essence of the policy framework when it does to set out to do what it was meant for?

5. Conclusion

The PTPDM policy 2018 of Ghana that supports the CPD of Ghanaian pre-tertiary teachers is a good thing, that has the potential of changing the educational sector as it sets out to equip teachers with current skills, and knowledge at every step of their career in order to go to the classrooms with dynamic instructional approaches that can positively impact on learning outcomes. However, for this to happen, teachers must be given the help, and push in diverse ways including funds, designing of relevant programmes, their views being listened and attended to, enabling environments, among others so that they can fully engage in the activities for the greater good.

6. Recommendations

Having linked professional development to promotion is a good thing, but there should be enough sensitisation for teachers to fully understand the need for their continuous development rather than engaging in such activities with the notion of getting more points in order to partly prepare them for their promotions. Also, there should be a way to assess teachers on the programmes they have attended as this can help to curb the situation where those willing to pay for INSETs do so without physically or even virtually being at the training places, but still get points because they paid for the programme. The study recommends that the same resources that were pumped in during the testing of the policy with the selected/ piloted districts should be continued now that there is a nationwide implementation. Thus, there's a call for adequate budget for the smooth running of the policy. Also, continuous revision of the policy is recommended in order to clearly provide details on the different kinds of CPD activities available to teachers, and the kind of support that exist for such programmes.

In order to make CPD programmes effective, efforts should be made to include on the various schools' time tables such activities where teachers will not have to make any personal compromises, or leave learners behind in order to attend such programmes. For example, one very Wednesday of the week that teachers are to attend CPL nationwide, it can be captured on the various time tables, so that learners can be closed early for the teachers to also have time to engage in their own learning activities. Stakeholders, especially, teachers' inputs should be collected and considered when designing CPD activities for them.

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